

Marlene Bayer
Salvation Army School for the Deaf
Basic School 1

April 2010

My final report in Ghana, Swedru

My school for the Deaf in Swedru:

Headmistress: Madam Favour Aflakpui
Class Teacher: Mrs. Mawuanyo Adra
Mentor: Mrs. Lucy Turkson

Introduction:

Salvation Army School for the Deaf was found in 1995. There are 14 teachers, 2 deaf teaching assistants, 3 student teachers from Winneba and 3 volunteers from Germany. In this school are approximately 80 pupils. (Really there are approximately above 125 pupils but some stay at home because they don't have money for school or they have got to help their parent to do work. Absenteeism is a real problem in the school.)

On September 15, 2009 I first came to the Salvation Army School for the Deaf. I am a volunteer and I have worked in this school for 8 months. It was good to get to know more about the school. I am very grateful for what I have received in this school.

My headmistress, Madam Favour Aflakpui, received me with a warm welcome at this school and she introduced me to all teachers in this school and showed me around the school. Salvation Army Schools have three groups of the schools. The groups are A, B and C. The groups of A and B are from the hearing school and the group of C is the deaf school.

My headmistress introduced me to the Municipal Director, Ghana Education Service, the Municipal Chief Executive and the Regional Manager Salvation Army Education Unit, too. It was nice knowing them and they gave me a warm welcome.

My goals and wishes in this school:

When I was in Germany I wanted to help and teach the deaf children at the school. That was my plan and expectation which I wanted to achieve.

I wanted to explain to them general knowledge and open their minds about the world, the different countries, different cultures and languages.

My dream is coming true and I am glad that I have it and I have a big experience for that. I do not only want to teach them: I want that we learn and understand life better and be happy.

Activities:

The school starts at 8.00am o'clock and ends it at 2.00pm o'clock. Only J.H.S. pupils have the time-table until 2.30pm every day. The pupils bring the water from a nearby house to the school and they have got to clean around the school and then they always have Morning assembly before they go to their classroom. They always have the Closing assembly, too when they are ready to go to their homes. Every Wednesday the pupils have school worship so they pray together in a room in the morning and learn a text from the Bible.

In the beginning I only observed in many different classes while the teachers taught the pupils. So I could get to know more and more about the situation and what they were doing. After that I began to work with Mrs. Adra and we teach the pupils in the first class. I observed Mrs. Adra teaching the pupils in maths and natural science. I teach English. There are eight pupils in my class. The communication with the children was not difficult because I was in Canada as an exchange student for a year so I know already the American Sign Language and in Ghana, there are two deaf teaching assistants in this school so they are teaching me some Ghanaian Sign Language. I learnt it very fast words because the sign is almost the same as the American Sign Language. Only few words are different, for example, foods, culture and months because in America they don't have it. I am really very interested to learn about the culture and the Ghanaian Sign Language in Ghana. That is why I don't have problem in communicating with the pupils. In the beginning the pupils were shy and curious when I was teaching the pupils about the letters of the alphabet from A to Z, I used some words, things in the house, animals and vehicles, etc. It is a lot of fun for me to teach the pupils.

I like to work with the class teacher Mrs. Adra so we share our task together. She can sign the language but it is not as good as me but she is still learning the sign language. She teaches Natural Science in the class and I sometimes help her with the sign language to make the pupils understand better. Mrs. Adra is a nice and friendly person and we talk about our task what we should do in the class and I tell her what ideas I have in teaching different topics to the pupils.

After Christmas Holidays, I mostly teach English but when Mrs. Adra was so sick I sometimes took other subjects to occupy them in the class.

What I was teaching and the pupils have learned:

- 1) English: They finished learning the letters from A to Z with things. When they finished learning the alphabet I gave them the cross riddle to find where the words are. It is good practical for them to understand the word when they learn it so often. The pupils will be able to learn names of objects in the school, classroom and home. They write the names on the board and book. They have got to choose from the words on the board and write these words correctly. I teaching them the sentences likewise that. For example: (I have a bag. I have a chair. This is an orange. This is a ball. My name is, I am a girl or boy.) They learn the names of days of the week. They will be able to copy short meaningful sentences with `My First Book`.

- 2) Maths: They learned about the addition and subtraction. They will be able to count and tell how many objects are in two groups of objects put together. Put the groups together and find how many they make together. They will be able to write addition or subtraction sentences for two groups of objects and put together using `plus´ or ´ minus´ and equal to symbols. They can count sum up to 10. They know how to sign from zero to twenty but they can count only from zero to ten. I have taught them the names of the numeral from 0 to 10. They count the objects, too. They are very good at identifying shapes. In addition, I am teaching them how to tell the time on the clock.
- 3) Creative Art: We like to do handicrafts, drawing and painting and of course we make folds and special origami fun folds together. The children enjoy the Creative Art lessons.
- 4) Natural Science: The pupil will be able to describe some characteristics of Living-Things and Non-Living-Things. They have learnt the connection between animals and plants. I have taught them about the parts of the body, too. They have learnt hair, eye, nose, mouth, ear, arm, head, hand, finger, leg, toe and foot. They have learnt parts of a tree e.g leaves, stem and roots.
- 5) I like teaching them the songs in the German and Ghanaian Sign Language and I tell them stories in pictures, like “Father and Son”.

At first it was not easy teaching them because they pay less attention when I am communicating with them. They only used to drawing and copying from the blackboard. These deaf children are not taught sign language at home so they need to work hard at learning the sign language. It took a lot of effort before I got them to have that basic communication link with people.

The pupils went for Athletics at Swesbu. It was very interesting to watch how the pupils were running, jumping and throwing balls. There were a lot of different hearing schools, too. We enjoyed and had a good time there.

When my family came to visit my school in Swedru. They brought a check with a donation from the Deaf Association in Lübeck (name of the city). One of my sisters was there, the Deaf Association in Lübeck, and she initiated fund-raising campaign. She collected the money from there and donated to the Deaf School in Swedru with a voucher .The value was 320 GHc. (Three hundred and twenty Ghana cedis)

I was responsible for the disbursement of the money.

I first asked all teachers in the school what they need in their classes and what they urgently needed in the school.

I drew up the list which the money can cater for and went with Priscilla Buabeng, a deaf teacher, to Accra. We bought many things, for example: (small black blackboards for the class of Kindergarten, scissors , rules, pencils, rubbers, eraser for all, 2 bowl for water, loured pencils, brush with cloured paint, duster for the blackboard in each classes, tapes, two mats for small children to sleep, puzzle, toy, football, volleyball, Big Drawing instruments, locking tape measure, Rip saw, claw Hammer, Litmus papers, respiratory system, white boards for J.H.S pupils, drawing instrument for mathematics, white papers and pens) for our school in Swedru.

In the second class their blackboard was in very poor condition so I decided to donate a blackboard. There is a deaf who is a carpenter. I then gave the order to make a new blackboard and now the pupils have finally a nice smooth blackboard hanging in their class.

My former deaf school in Hamburg has also discarded English books and donated these books for the Salvation Army School for the Deaf. My Family brought these books to the school. These books come from the higher classes of the 6th benefit, where they will find application in teaching English.

My small project at this school:

I have an idea and I want to make a small project at the school. I taught about countries and where we live on earth. I think, it is very important for the pupils to learn about the world. I explain to them with a big world map and showed them the photos where I live in Germany, Hamburg. I took them for over an hour in the class and had a special lesson with them for two times. First I taught only J.H.S. pupils and then later the first class to six class. It was worth teaching them because the pupils were really very interested to listen about the different cultures and had a lot of questions about it.

Observations:

I can observe eight pupils in the class and I notice that a boy has problem with his mental development. His name is Godfred K. Buabeng Mensah. I had difficulty communicating with him. If I like to ask him a question, he can't answer the question. Besides he can draw and write very well. He copies the letters orderly. I think because of this he needs special attention and more help than the other pupils get more support in his education. So he might learn a different way to understand. We should give him more time, too.

In my class the pupils are very interested to learn more and more. I can observe that the pupils enjoy learning more. I want to use their interest and curiosity to teach them more about different topics. They do like to do the cross riddle very much when they already learnt about the letters. In the beginning they did not know what is the cross riddle so I tried teaching them to understand how to do. And then they liked to do it because it was fun to search and find more words in a cross riddle.

I taught them a lot of different topics; for example Weekdays, months, year and about time. I tell them stories e.g about a father with his son. When I am teaching them I do not teach for once, I teach them as many times as possible until they understand.

Lupina and Nicki are volunteers from Germany. They are at this school for a year. We started to try to support two pupils who have problems with communication and language comprehension. A boy in my class and a girl in the second class. We take them for an hour in the afternoon in another room and have a special lesson with them. But later I concentrated on my pupils and take more time in the first class to teach them more about the subject.

The pupils are really very interested to learn more words and I can observe that the pupils learn day by day more better so they can improve to understand what I am teaching them. A boy, Prince Oboakoh, came after New Year, in my class and I have observed him for about 3 months. He has problem with his eye so he can't see very well but he is smart, can learn fast and is very good at maths. His performance is good and he is a good pupil. But he has problem to write the letters orderly because of his problem with eye. He is unable to read from the blackboard.



There are nine pupils in my class. (2 girls and 7 boys)

Emmanuel Frimpong (7 years old) is a good boy. He can't sit quiet for a long time on his chair. He needs some time to move his body and his behaviour is a little different than other pupils. I have got to be more patient with him and try to encourage him to learn.

Samuel Tioh (approximately 15 years old) is a nice and helpful boy. He likes working with his hands. He needs some more time to learn and he likes the cross riddle very much.

Lord Appiah Baiden (10 years old) is a friendly and helpful boy, too. He needs more time to learn like Samuel Tioh and he enjoys doing handicrafts with papers.

Caleb Agyepong (approximately 12 years old) is a smart boy and nice boy. He likes to talk about Spiderman a lot this he sees on the TV. He is very good at paper crease.

Rita Yeboah (14 years old), is a moody girl but when I spent a long time with her and have a lot patient with her, she has changed to be friendly girl. She likes to laugh some times. She learns and understands well.

Janet Mensah (9 years old) is a clever, shy and friendly girl. She is very eager and interested to learn more words about things and is a very good pupil.

Godfred Kojo Buabeng Mensah (8 years old) has problem with his mental development and has difficulty understanding but he is very good at art and writes the letters orderly.

Kofi Kpehor (13 years old) is a nice and smart boy. He understands fast and could be a good pupil but he is missing in the class very often and after New Year he has come only once to school. He has got to help his parent on the farm. It is very sad not seeing him often in the class.

Prince Oboakoh (approximately 15 years old) is a likewise good pupil and his favourite subject is maths.

Some pupils in my class learn fast. Some other pupils learn slowly and they need more time to learn of the comparison from the other pupils.

Meeting with Mrs. Kwadade and Madam Rosemond Blay (the Director of SpeD):

Mrs. Kwadade and the Dircetor of Special Eduaction visited our school in Swedru on March 23th 2010. The meeting was good and everything went well. We talked and reflected on the school, my hostfamily, final report and my project at the Salvation Army School for Deaf.

What will be my project of this school?

My project is: a sign board showing direction to the school. It costs 200cedis. It will be financed by my organization EMC in Germany and work with Mrs. Kwadade together. We decided on a sign board because my school doesn't have a sign board showing direction so everyone can find it as the school is hidden. It is very important to show where the Deaf School is in Swedru so some people can see where it is and get to know it.

My observation and suggestion:

It will be good if this school is a boarding school and has a school bus because the main problem is with transport: The reason is that most pupils can not come to the school because they live far away from the school so they can not afford the transport to school and back home each day.

That is why I think, it will be a good idea with a school bus because it will help the pupils with the transport. A boarding school will be a great idea. I know that this school doesn't have much money for that but I hope it will be one day successfully.

Conclusion:

I am really happy that I am at the Salvation Army School for the Deaf because there I learn a lot from teachers and pupils. They are very friendly. I get to know a different culture and everybody, the teachers and the pupils, are very nice to me. I enjoy teaching the pupils in the class.

The pupils are very interested in learning and are eager to learn more and more. I really will miss much about it. It makes me very sad and difficult to leave this school.

My host family:

The host family received me with a warm welcome on September 7, at their home. I stayed with a big family in the house and I have got a nice own room. I live with grandmother, Monica Appiah (73 years old), grandfather Joseph Appiah (72 years old), their daughter Rose (46 years old), their son Prince (40 years old), their four granddaughters, Suzy (she is going to a boarding school), Anita (20 years old), Gloria (19 years old) and Gifty (13 years old) and their grandson Edward (25 years old) in this home. They are nice and friendly to me. There are many goats and two neighbours, a family with a small son and a family with three daughters in this house, too.

My host grandmother can speak a little English and I can't speak Fante but we communicate with gesture and a little home African Sign Language. I try to teach the host family the Ghanaian Sign Language. Gifty is good at the alphabet. Gloria and Gifty know a little sign language, for example: good morning, good afternoon, good night, how are you? Fine, thank you. It is wonderful.

When we want to talk for a long time, we write it on paper to make understand better.

I get three meals a day, in the morning I usually take bread and milo. I will have lunch with fruits and the dinner in the evening. When I was sick they cared for me well.

My favourite food is Banku and I enjoy learning how to cook Banku with okro. It is very delicious and I just love it. I learn how to cook Fufu, too. But it is not as delicious as Banku for me. I like to eat yam and stew, too. Jollof rice tastes good.

I learn how to sweep my room and wash my clothing using water and soap with hand. It is fun and a lot of work washing. It is not the same as what I use to do in Germany. But I enjoy learning everything from here.

I always like sitting outside and watching while Anita cooks the food at the fire place and how the goats eat and play together.

When I came to the host family I met a volunteer there. Her name is Rowan and she is from England. She stayed here for 5 months but she soon went to back her home in England. Then a week later came another new volunteer, her name is Inguun and she is from Norway. She has spent 3 months long with us and has gone away to her home, too. When she went away two new volunteers came to the house. They are from Germany. Their names are Julia and Andrea. Julia is staying here for 6 months and Andrea for 5 months. They are also very interested to learn the Germany Sign Language. I like teaching them the fundamentals of the Sign Language and in the beginning we have got to write a lot on papers but a few weeks after we do not use paper so we can communicate with the Sign Language.

My home is not far away from my school. I walk every day to the school and back home. It takes around 10 minutes. It is an exercise for me. During my free time I like reading books, swimming, talking and going out with my friends, visiting some places in Ghana.

Everythings is going on well with the host family. I am grateful to stay with the host family for 8 months.

My family from Germany and travel around in Ghana:

My family, my mother and two older sisters (they are deaf, too) visited me in January. I was very happy about their visit to Ghana.

At beginning when I had 3 weeks holidays in Christmas and New Year so we traveled around in Ghana. We made a trip to the northern Ghana. We visited Kumasi, the second city in Ghana. That is really a very nice place and we could see many different cultural things at the Culture Center in Kumasi. And then we went to Larabanga. We visited National Park and we went on and took a safari car where we can see the wild animals, elephants, crocodiles, monkeys, birds, wild boars and deer live there. It was fantastic and beautiful.

We went to Tamale to visit a city. It is very different than the south Ghana. It is a quiet place, few plants and there you can see a lot of mosque. And then we went to Bolgatanga and Paga the border of Burkina Faso. We saw the crocodiles how they were fed with a chicken and the history about the primitive life before for long time in the northern Ghana. It is interesting to listen to the story.

In the North the people living there are mostly Muslims and in the south the people there are mostly Christians.

Last we went to Cape Coast to see a slave castle. It is really very sad to hear about the history how the white people were treating the Ghanaians and they were transport to America so they were becoming slaves there.

We visited the Kakum Nationalpark, too. It was a good experience for us and we really enjoyed our travel around Ghana.

My family visited my school in Swedru, too. They wanted to see how I am working at this school.

Mid-Stay Orientation at Ho and Hohoe:

(AFS CAMP, Intercultural Programs Ghana, January 29th – February 2nd 2010)

At first the meeting was with two different organizations in Accra at the office from AFS organization. We, four volunteers (Lena, Susanne, Franziska and I) belong to the organization bezev in Germany. Another five girls volunteers from the organization AFS in Germany. Both organizations work together on the Mid-Stay in Ho and Hohoe. We drove in a bus from the organization AFS in Accra to Ho and we slept there for 2 nights at Hostel.

Interpreter for the sign language should be there for me. I was very sad and disappointed that the interpreter for the sign language was not there. But lucky my friends from the same organization did a little interpretation in sign language for me. We communicate with finger spelling and the German Sign Language. I already taught them before. I hope some day later if new deaf volunteer come to Ghana and it must be planned better with the sign language interpreter.

We were on Orientation Sessions in a seminar room and talked about different topics. Sometimes when we were in our small groups to discuss the person will writing on the paper for me so I can get the information what they are talking about: For example: ("Self introduction", "Mood curve", "Candle light expectation", "Family and family structure", "Communication and conflict styles", "My host family", "Sex and opposite sex (Gender roles)", "Religion in Ghana", "Work in the projects", "Where am I and where I want to be") It was very good for us, the volunteer, because we can share our experience and our problems. We were comparing and talked about the different cultures and communication between Ghana and western countries. We recognized what we were doing well and what we should do better.

We went to Hohoe and stayed there for 2 nights at Mountain Paradise Vane.

We would have to see attractions in Volta region, too. We walked to Wli waterfalls and some of us swam in the waterfalls. It was very cold but we had a lot of fun. We were hiking from mountain of Mt Gemi to river Canyon. We had a break there with the lunch. It is very beautiful to see mountains and rivers. We enjoyed our hike and it took about 3 hours. We were sweating when we arrived at hostel. We saw the beautiful countryside of Ghana.

In the night there was drumming and dancing performance. It was very lovely to see the Ghanaian culture.

At last we talked about the Orientation, Evaluation and feedback.

We had a good experience and a great memory during our Mid-Stay Orientation.

My wish and goal for the further:

When I go to Germany I will give a lecture about my stay in Ghana and present the life, the culture, the deaf school, the host family and the travel in Ghana to them.

I hope that in future a new deaf volunteer after me who is going to Ghana can work with the teachers and pupils at the deaf school. It will be wonderful and convenient experience like what I had.

Final words:

I should like to thank Mrs. Kwadade, the Director of SpeD (Madam Rosemond Blay), Headmistress Madam Favour Aflakpui, the mentor Mrs. Lucy Turkson, my class teacher Mrs. Adra, the host family and friends for the warm welcome they gave me in Ghana.

I am very grateful for your help and kindness.

I really enjoyed my stay in Ghana for 8 months and I have learnt a lot from Ghanaians. It is a terrific and interested experience for me to learn a different culture and I will never forget about it. A part from Ghana will be staying always in my heart.